

Check Out the News

A GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING THE NEWS AND MAKING GOOD CHOICES

INTRODUCTION

How To Use This LAMPLit

Most people are confident that they understand the news. Many people also have strong opinions about the news, as well as favorite sources to turn to: newspapers, television, the radio or the Internet. How do you identify news from other types of media messages? Why do you prefer certain types of news, but not others? Has news always been the same? How much do you really know about news?

News is a type of media message we think of as non-fictional and informative, as opposed to fictional and entertaining, like TV sitcoms or dramas; or persuasive, like advertising. In truth news is all of these: informative, entertaining and persuasive. This LAMPLit is a guide to the news:

what news is; where it can be found; how it is produced in different media (newspapers, TV, the Internet, etc.), how it has changed over time and continues to change; and how to evaluate news and to make good choices. Think of this as a guide to becoming news literate.

Each of the following brief sections stands alone. You can begin your exploration of news by starting anywhere in this LAMPLit. Each section includes a short list of references to turn to for more information if you would like to deepen your understanding of the issue that's been introduced. Some sections even include suggestions for activities to help you better understand the processes of newsgathering, reporting and distribution.

The very end of the LAMPLit contains a list of print and electronic sources—books, magazines and websites—to explore news even further.



➔ New York Times AIR Reader // © 2009, O'Reilly Media, Inc.

WHAT IS NEWS?

As the introduction explains, news is a type of media message that we think of as non-fiction and informative. It is an account of real events and issues in our world, our country, our city or our neighborhood that are considered important enough

for many people to know about. We know that not everything that happens in a day is considered important enough to become news, even though it might be very important to you, your family, or your friends. For example, missing the bus this morning on your way to school and ending

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

WHAT'S INSIDE?

INTRODUCTION

How To Use This LAMPLit

WHAT IS NEWS?

Gatekeepers Decide the News

NEWS CHARACTERISTICS

News is Timely

News is Consequential

News has Geographic and Cultural Proximity

News is Dramatic

News is Narrative

WHERE DO YOU FIND NEWS?

How is News Produced in Different Media?

WHO PAYS FOR NEWS?

Something To Keep in Mind

HOW IS NEWS CHANGING?

HOW CAN I MAKE GOOD CHOICES FOR NEWS?

WHAT'S THE LAMP?

With a commitment to address the lack of basic media literacy education in New York City schools and communities, The LAMP (Learning About Multimedia Project) offers free workshops and public events designed to help young people, parents and teachers make sense of the media barrage they encounter in their daily lives. LAMP workshops not only demystify the content and technologies of media, but they also help bridge the digital divide that often alienates youth from adults, while providing the workforce development skills needed to compete in a modern job market. By creating and editing their own blogs, videos, newspapers and more, students are further encouraged to explore the use of media as a positive outlet for creative expression.

WHO IS THE LAMP?

DC Vito, Co-Founder & Executive Director
dc@thelampnyc.org

Katherine Fry, Ph.D., Co-Founder & Education Dtr
katfry@thelampnyc.org

Emily Long, Communications Director
emily@thelampnyc.org

WHERE IS THE LAMP?

thelampnyc.org



SCAN THIS QR
CODE WITH YOUR
iPHONE TO GO
TO OUR WEBSITE
RIGHT NOW!

up having to walk the whole way is not considered an event that's important enough to make it onto the 5:00 pm line-up of your local TV news program. However, if you ended up having to walk to school, and something amazing and unusual happened on that walk--say for instance you pulled a litter of abandoned baby tigers out of a big cardboard box and took them to an animal rescue shelter—that might make the news.

Events that make the news are typically things that don't happen every day, and have a significance beyond one person's personal life. In the case of the walk to school and baby tigers, it's a story that many people would find touching because it involves vulnerable, though wild, animals, and it speaks to the larger issues of animal protection and life-saving measures. In fact, it is an event filled with drama, consequence, and timeliness. We'll come back to those concepts in the section called *News Characteristics*.

Gatekeepers Decide the News

The information that makes it into a newspaper, onto the TV news line-up, or posted on a news Internet site is the decision of people who work for a particular news organization. Depending upon which medium it is (print, broadcasting or cable, the Internet) they are called editors, news directors, or even news managers. Taking recommendations from reporters, assistant editors, and many others within their organization, these are the people who sift through the events and issues of the day and make the final decisions about what will become news. Another name for these decision-makers is *gatekeepers*. That's the term we will use here. It is a useful term to use when talking about the people who make the final decisions about what

information will make it through the gate, so to speak, and into the final published newspaper, magazine, radio or television program, or onto the Internet website.

Gatekeepers get to make the decisions for their own news organization, and they base their decisions on their experience in the news industry, their training, what they think audiences want or need, and sometimes their own personal interests or the interests of others helping them make the decisions. However, if gatekeepers make their own news decisions for their own news organization separate from all other news organizations, why does it sometimes seem like the news is all the same every day across television stations, in newspapers and on the Internet?

Most news organizations seem to cover the same stories, you may have noticed, with very little variety across media. The reason for this is that no matter who the gatekeepers are, and what their decision-making process is like, they all operate with a basic understanding of news that is shared within the news business as a whole, and even within their larger culture. Some very basic characteristics of news are understood by everyone, whether they work in the news business or they regularly read/watch/listen to news as audience members. We will explore some of those characteristics here, specifically the characteristics of timeliness, drama, consequence, proximity, and narrative.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Jamison, K. Hall, and Campbell, K. K. (1997). *What is News? In The Interplay of Influence: News, Advertising, Politics, and the Mass Media* (pp. 40-77). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Powers, R. (1980). *The Newscasters: The News as Show Business*. New York: Norton.

NEWS CHARACTERISTICS

News is Timely

What you watch on the morning news program or listen to on the radio when you wake up is not something that happened 10 years ago, or even last year (unless you're hearing about the anniversary of something big that happened, like the first man to walk on the moon or the events of 9-11-01 in New York City, Washington, D.C. and beyond). The news each day is something that is happening now, has just happened, or is the latest information about something that has been happening. That's why it's called *news*. News is current. It's not history. When gatekeepers decide on news content, timeliness is one of the most important characteristics they keep in mind. That's why they like to include phrases such as «breaking news,» and «live» on broadcast and Internet news reports. A bank robbery or house fire that took place last week won't make it into today's news line-up *unless* there's something timely about it that has occurred, such as a new development that the gatekeepers think is important enough for people to know about today, or right now.

News is Consequential

Items that make up the news often affect a large number of people. Whether an event or issue has to do with politics, the economy, natural disaster, or an entire neighborhood, if it affects

many people it is likely to become a news story covered on TV, in the newspaper, on the radio, or on the Internet. When the stock market fluctuates for a long period of time and many investors lose a great deal of money, causing companies to become smaller and many workers to lose their jobs, the situation will make the news. Even though not all reporters or news organizations will explain the situation the same way, or might give different reasons for why it happened, they will all recognize that such a significant event, involving so many people and the entire economy, is definitely a worthwhile news story to cover.

You have probably noticed that celebrities or other well-known individuals are the focus of many news stories. One of the big reasons that news organizations include stories about many of the little, personal things that happen in the lives of celebrities is that they consider celebrities themselves to have a high consequence. In other words, celebrities matter to a lot of people who want to know the smallest, personal details about their personal lives. Whether or not you consider this important news, it seems that news organizations like to include it, and to make it as dramatic as they can to attract their audience.

Sometimes an event will occur that will be quite dramatic, but will not affect many people; therefore, it won't become a big news item. For example, an earthquake in northern Los Angeles will affect many people, causing a lot of infrastructural and personal damage. It will be a big and prolonged news story nationally and internationally. An



➔ An interview with an AFAQ TV reporter at a water distribution site on Joint Security Station Shawra Wa Um Jidir // © 2009, NewsBlaze, Daily News

earthquake in a rural part of the country, or in another remote area where the population is sparse, though it may measure very high on the Richter scale, won't be as big a news story because fewer people will be affected by it.

News has Geographic and Cultural Proximity

Most of the news we get tends to be about people and places that are familiar to us or close to us. Another way to say this is that news has proximity. When gatekeepers decide on news content, one of the things they consider is whether the event or situation is relevant to the audience. Sometimes it's relevant only if it happens close by and affects people within a specific geographic area, or is in close proximity. When considering local television news, for example, most of the stories are about things that are happening in the local city or larger surrounding area. The same is the case for most city and neighborhood newspapers. A fire that breaks out at a home in Brooklyn, New York, would likely make it onto the evening newscast of one of the local New York City TV newscasts, but would not be broadcast in Boston or Chicago.

National television news, like the kind aired on the broadcast networks ABC, CBS or NBC, or cable stations such as CNN, MSNBC and Fox, consider the nation and even the world as relevant areas to cover for their audiences. The same can be said for national newspapers such as *The New York Times* or the *Washington Post*. The geographic footprint of relevance is much wider for these news outlets, but the stories reported from around the world are not always told the same way.

Sometimes cultural familiarity, or proximity, results in certain types of gate keeping choices. In the case of U.S. news organizations, it seems that stories about events in countries

outside the U.S. are not always comparable. For example, researchers who study news have found very often that when U.S. news organizations report stories from outside the U.S., the stories from countries similar to the U.S. (part of the dominant culture) are different from the stories from countries not similar to the U.S. Stories reported from European countries are not like stories from African countries or South American countries. The complaint has been that U.S. news organizations tend to focus on covering mostly disasters and conflicts in South American and African countries, while covering a much wider range of issues and events in European countries and in Japan, which are more like the U.S. socially and economically.

So, familiarity and geography are important factors that gatekeepers consider when deciding on what to include as news, and how the news will be presented.

News is Dramatic

Much of the news we read in newspapers or magazines, watch on TV, listen to on the radio and find on the Internet is dramatic. That means that events that happen are likely to become news if they include an element of drama, and have clearly identifiable good and bad characters or situations. A news story about a robbery at a convenience store will highlight who was robbed (the good guys) and who did the robbing (the bad guys, usually with guns or other weapons). In this situation the news story about the robbery makes clear who is good and who is bad. Another example of drama in news is when we get a story about someone who desires something and goes to great measure to obtain it, or when someone obtains something with great difficulty. A good example is a news story about an Olympic athlete who wins a

medal for outstanding athletic feats in spite of great personal or social obstacles that may have been placed in front of him or her. Finally, another kind of drama that makes for a good news story is when someone performs some type of heroic deed. When the pilot of the huge jet airliner made an emergency landing on the Hudson River in New York City because a flock of geese had flown into the engines, causing them to fail, he safely landed the jet in such a way that all of the passengers could exit safely. This made him a hero, and also made a terrific news story. In fact, news stories about this landing repeatedly referred to the pilot as a hero.

Generally speaking, if there is drama in an event or situation, it is more likely to become news than something that isn't dramatic. A rough plane landing on an airport tarmac isn't necessarily newsworthy, but a rough plane landing that includes flames coming out of the engine, and the need to quickly evacuate passengers, is considered newsworthy, even though everyone is safe in the end, because fire and rescue are very dramatic. If you pay close attention to the news on any given day you will notice that there is an element of drama in many of the news stories you read, watch or listen to.

News is Narrative

The way we understand events in the world and in our lives is often through story telling. Another way to refer to story telling is to call it narrative. Notice that we refer to news items as news stories. Most news is presented in words, photos and videos as stories or narratives because that's one of the best ways news people such as reporters and gatekeepers know how to explain what's happening around us, and it's also one of the best ways we as a culture can understand the things happening around us. It's not always an accurate way to understand, but it's very effective.

For example, a news story about a woman who gives birth to eight babies at one time was reported on the date of the birth as a timely and highly unusual event just because of the number of live children who were born to one woman at one time. But as reporters and other news people learned more about the situation, they discovered that the woman had six other children already at home, and that she was unmarried. These facts combined made for an even more unusual situation, compared to that of most other mothers in our culture. It is rare in our society today for a woman to give birth to so many children. But because of medical reproductive technologies available to us, it is physically possible for women to have multiple births, even as many as eight. In order to

make sense of this plausible but highly unusual situation, many news organizations reported stories about the woman in a way that cast her as not just unusual, but as a negative model of motherhood. In fact, she was practically demonized. By giving her the nickname "Octo-mom," the news industry equated the woman with a sea animal. Doing so made it easier for the public to consider her as something other than human. This is one way in which news organizations shaped, and re-told many times, a story about a woman and her many children that focused mostly on her personal characteristics, casting her as way outside the mainstream. The news spent very little time on other facts or issues surrounding the story, including modern reproductive technologies, medical ethics, or the role of the male parental figure(s) who were also involved in some way in the births of all of the children.

The point is that when news organizations report a story, they are doing more than just offering the facts. They are offering a way for the public not only to know, but also to understand an event or situation. They are drawing from culturally shared values and a motive to sell their news by making it as dramatic and as interesting as possible. The result is that news stories can be simplified, with little room to explain all of the complexities of a situation.

To Try On Your Own

An interesting exercise to try is to put yourself in the role of a news gatekeeper. Think about what you would choose as the top news stories for today within your own neighborhood, town, or city. Think about what you consider news to be, what your values are, what you think people should know about, or will want to know about. What's the most important stuff? Based on all of those considerations, make a list of stories for today's local TV news program in your area. You might want to share your list with others and compare what each of you chose.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Bird, S.E., and Dardenne, R. W. (1988). Myth, Chronicle and Story: Exploring the Narrative Qualities of News. In J. Carey (Ed.), *Media, Myths and Narratives: Television and the Press* (pp. 67-86). Newbury Park: Sage.

Lule, Jack (2001). *Daily News, Eternal Stories: The Mythological Role of Journalism*. New York: Guilford Press.

Philo, Greg (2002). Television News and Audience Understanding of War, Conflict and Disaster. *Journalism Studies*, 3, 173-186.

WHERE DO YOU FIND NEWS?

How is News Produced in Different Media?

So far we've made reference to news organizations, and talked about news appearing in newspapers and news magazines, on television, on the radio, and on the Internet. Today these are still the major media through which most people get their news. But people have not always had such a wide variety of choices to turn to for news and information. Before radio and television, most people got their daily news from newspapers if they could afford to buy one. During the 1920s radio started to become a source of news for people who owned what was then called a radio set. And although television became available to the U.S. public in the late 1940s, it wasn't until the 1960s

that people could watch a nightly newscast on the CBS broadcast network. It was almost a decade later that television began to broadcast daily local newscasts. Today television offers us news in some form 24 hours a day, across a range of television channels, on broadcast and cable. And since 1993, with the introduction of the World Wide Web, the Internet has become a major source of news 24 hours a day as well. All of these media are available to us today as news outlets, and each of



them is very different from the others as a medium for news for many different reasons. It is important to know something about these differences in order to understand the news you get from all of them.

Each medium presents news in a different way. As a result, audiences get a slightly different perspective or sense of what's happening in the world; depending upon which medium they choose for their news.

Let's start by talking about print news—the news we find in newspapers and news magazines. These are media that rely mostly on words to inform us, so we need to be literate in the language in which they are written. English language newspapers require that readers know how to read and understand the English language. Besides requiring literacy in a particular language, another unique characteristic of print news sources—newspapers and magazines—is that we can physically hold them, turn the pages and read at our own pace. We buy separate issues of each, sometimes daily and sometimes each week or each month. Traditional print sources are physical in a way that's very different from electronic sources. We can control the time in which we engage with these print media.

Radio and television were the first electronic news sources broadcasting news from one channel to many people all at the same time. People have used these media to get news for a long time. One big advantage broadcast news has had over print news is that people can get the news faster, sometimes as soon as something happens. While faster isn't always better, sometimes audiences prefer not having to wait until the next day to read yesterday's news in a newspaper, or even to wait a week to read it in a news magazine.

The biggest differences between print and broadcast news are that, as mentioned above, newspapers rely mostly on printed words to convey a news story, while television relies mostly on moving video images, and radio relies on spoken words and other sounds. Printed words, images and sounds are all very different forms of communicating news, and each one of these forms requires a different kind of attention, and produces a different understanding or connection to the news for audience members.

For example, if a big fire breaks out at a local school, all of the gatekeepers of all the local news outlets within a city will choose it as a top news story. The local newspaper will describe the fire with words, and very likely stunning photographs of flames will accompany the story in the next day's newspaper. The local

television station could get live video footage of the fire on the scene, and could include live interviews with firefighters, neighbors and maybe even the school principal. The local radio station could also be live on the scene, describing the flames on the air, and perhaps setting the acoustic scene by emphasizing the sounds of the fire engines, the firefighters yelling to each other and neighbors exclaiming at what they are experiencing.

Each of these ways of conveying news about the fire is very different. Each has its advantages. The newspaper account will probably provide in-depth coverage of the fire story, and will likely give detailed facts that the broadcast media will not include. The television account of the fire will probably be very visually stunning, giving the audience an immediate, emotional jolt. The radio story, using only sounds, will probably also provide an emotional jolt, but one that is different because it is based on the sounds of the event rather than the visuals. Each medium requires audience members to make use of different senses, and each also encourages a different kind of engagement. Print sources, such as newspapers, tend to appeal more to one's logic and reason than do electronic sources, such as television and radio, which appeal more to emotion. One medium is not necessarily better than another, but they are very different, and most people tend to have their own personal news media preferences, choosing one over another most times.

Today news is changing rapidly. It's no longer the case that newspapers, TV stations and radio stations provide us with the bulk of our news. Because of the Internet, news can be generated very quickly, using words, visuals and sounds, with hyperlinks to other websites and constant updates, with words, visuals and sounds. Many traditional newspapers, TV news stations and radio stations now also have an Internet counterpart where people can go to get news digitally, or to interact with the news program. Internet news is different from the kind of news one can get more traditionally from newspapers, radio, TV and radio. We'll explore those differences in the upcoming section, "How is News Changing?"

To Try On Your Own

A fun news exercise to try is to come up with a local or national event that could plausibly become a news story. First, write it as a newspaper story. After you do that, write a television script for a two-minute TV news story and describe what the accompanying video footage for the story would look like. Finally, write a radio script for that same story and describe the sounds that might be included in a two-minute radio story. Ask yourself, what are the main differences in the story across all of these very different media? Which story do you think is best? Why do you think so?

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Fry, K. (2003). *Constructing the Heartland: Television News and Natural Disaster*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Pavlik, J. (2001). *Journalism and New Media*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Postman, N. and Powers, S. (1992). *How to Watch TV News*. New York: Penguin.





➔ Kent Miller (assistant photojournalism professor, Central Michigan University) shooting in Alaska // © 2009, Central Michigan University

WHO PAYS FOR NEWS?

Most of the news we get from news organizations in the United States is paid for by advertisers. The U.S. tradition of having advertisers pay for news content dates way back to the nineteenth century, during a time when there were many competing newspapers in the largest cities. Newspapers were trying to capture the attention of people in these growing urban areas, but many of those people could not afford to pay very much for a newspaper. Advertisers, who wanted to reach them as potential consumers of their products, found newspapers to be a perfect place to showcase their products through print ads, so they invested a lot of money in the publishing of the paper, keeping the cost of the paper very low for the readers.

When radio and television were developed as news media in the 20th century, the model of having advertisers pay for news content continued. The result has been that the news has been very inexpensive, almost free, to audience members. We still have to pay the price for an individual newspaper or news magazine, but what we are paying for is very little of the actual cost of gathering the news and printing it. Advertising pays most of the cost, and in almost all newspapers, 80% of what you see in the paper is advertisements, while 20% is what is called the “news hole,” or the space left over to fill with news stories. It’s the very same for television and radio. Advertisers pay a great deal of money to air their commercials during news programs on most stations that carry news, and the way many news producers see it, they are producing news designed, ultimately, to capture an audience to deliver to their advertisers.

Because advertisers are paying for the news that is produced in commercial media, sometimes conflicts come up between gatekeepers, who are deciding what will become the day’s news, and advertisers, who are paying for it. For example, if a television news program is being paid for, in part, by a big grocery store chain that is airing lots of commercials during the news program, and the news line-up one night includes a story about big problems at the grocery store, the store itself might threaten to pull its advertising from the news program unless the station decides to drop the story. In an instance like that, the station’s gatekeepers have to decide whether they want to serve the public with information about the grocery store, and risk losing some of their profit, or drop the story so the public doesn’t find out about it, and not lose their advertising profit. These sorts of conflicts come up for commercial television, radio, and print media all of the time because they rely on advertising to pay for their news content.

Within traditional electronic media like TV and radio, the alternative to this advertisement model for paying for the news is the public broadcasting model. That means that some TV and radio stations don’t have to rely on advertisers to pay for their content, but it’s still almost free to audience members. Public television and radio stations—which you can find in most areas of the U.S.—are different. They tend to produce a lot of news and information programming, but they get their money from other sources: big foundations that want to help out, taxpayer money that the government gives them, corporations that want to serve the public in some way, and even some money comes from the stations’ viewers and listeners who want to watch and listen to news that isn’t linked to advertisers’ biggest concern, which is to make a profit.

Something To Keep in Mind

Knowing who is paying for the bulk of the news that you read, watch, or listen to is an important part of being news literate. It helps you to keep in mind what the gatekeepers are thinking about most when they make their news decisions—serving their audience members with information or serving their advertisers who pay the bills. It helps you to better evaluate the news that you get from any source. In most instances, gatekeepers want to serve both, but it is a challenge for them to do so.

HOW IS NEWS CHANGING?

News happens to be changing a great deal right now. For a very long time almost everyone got most of their information about their world from what we call traditional news media, the ones we've been discussing so far: newspapers, magazines, television stations, and radio stations. And those news sources have provided news gathered by traditional reporters and chosen by traditional gatekeepers. So, for most of the last century, and long before that, news was gathered and reported by a few people, and received by audience members who were not part of the process of gathering and reporting. Audience members were merely the receivers who could occasionally write letters to the editor of the newspaper or call the local news stations with comments about stories they heard. But now, because of the Internet and other digital media technologies, all of that is changing. It's not the case anymore that only trained journalists and other news personnel are the major suppliers and gatekeepers of news and information. All of us can be suppliers, reporters, editors and gatekeepers.

Today, almost anyone who has the interest and the time to gather information and report it can do so using the Internet. Sometimes the term 'citizen journalist' is used to describe anyone who produces news on their own and makes it available to anyone else interested in that news. Citizen journalists make their local, national, or even international news available digitally to anyone who has the digital means to access it from weblogs (blogs), videologs (vlogs), personal websites, social networking sites, collective video sites, and any similar digital sites that people can access from their personal computers, their cell phones, PDAs, or other such mobile electronic devices. The news that citizen journalists generate is through words, visuals and sound, and sometimes all of them together.

This change in how news is produced *and* how people get news is actually changing what news is, and even how people think about news. For example, events that would not normally be reported quickly, if at all, by traditional news media are now well known by many, many people in a very short time, and in a different way because of cell phone cameras, text-messaging and micro-blogging networks such as Twitter. Initial information about the massacre that occurred at Virginia Tech University in 2007 was captured by students on campus via their cell phones. Cell phone voices and text messages were the initial ways in which campus officials, then the local and national media, found out what was going on. They were also used to warn others on campus so they could try to stay safe. Without cell phones, television news stations and newspapers would not have been able to report the story as it unfolded. When an American Airliner jet made an emergency landing on the Hudson River in New York City during the winter of 2009,

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Hamilton, J.T. (2004). *All the News That's Fit to Sell: How the Market Transforms Information Into News*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Squires, J.D. (1994). *Read All About It! The Corporate Takeover of America's Newspapers*. New York: Times Books.

many people found out about it via first-hand observers who spread the information via Twitter feeds. It was through these tweets that Internet sites, TV stations and newspapers all first learned about the landing.

When many people have access to electronic devices, and can send information to each other, spreading news and information virally through personal electronic devices, traditional news outlets no longer have complete control over the news that most people have access to. They stand to lose



Washington Post on an Apple iPhone

their gatekeeping control. What this means for the future of these traditional news outlets is still not clear. It's not clear, either, what will happen to our traditional ideas about what news is and what the characteristics of news ought to be, and even how news will be paid for in the future.

To Try On Your Own

Think about yourself as a citizen journalist. What kind of news you would like to produce if you did it every day? What type of medium would you use?

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Carey, J., and Maynard, N.H. (2005). *The Future of News, the Future of Journalism*, in G. Overholser and K.H. Jamieson (Eds.), *The Press* (pp. 415-432). New York: Oxford University Press.

Stephens, M. (2007). *A History of News*. New York: Oxford University Press.

HOW CAN I MAKE GOOD CHOICES FOR NEWS?

With all of the news sources surrounding us today, and all of the media through which we can access news, we can easily feel overwhelmed. We can also feel confused about which sources are trustworthy news sources. There is no easy answer to the question: Where should I get my news?

Perhaps the best answer, for now, is that you should try to get your news from a variety of sources. Variety here means variety in the media forms you choose and variety in the types of messages you choose. In other words, if you tend to get all of your news from cable television, you might supplement that by adding some newspaper time into the mix, or maybe spend a little bit of time listening to a public radio station to find out what they're reporting. Likewise, if you tend to get all of your news from one newspaper, you might consider turning on a cable TV news channel occasionally to see how they are presenting some of the stories you've been following in print. If the Internet is your sole source of news, consider comparing what you read at the websites of major news organizations with what you might read at some blog sites, or on social networking sites like Facebook, or video sites such as YouTube.

It's always good to vary the perspective of your news sources as well. A big part of news literacy is understanding that there really is no such thing as an objective point of view in news, and that all news sources, because of technologies and because of personal, organizational and economic considerations, have their own way of shaping news. Most people like to attend to news sources that share their political or social viewpoints, and most people are aware of the news sources producing messages in line with their own way of thinking, as well as those with which they disagree. However, it's good to tune in to a variety of message sources to get a

full range of how news stories are being told across media. This practice gives you a fuller understanding not only of the various ways in which news can be presented, but might even make you more open-minded in the way you, yourself, see the world. Your perspective on the world is shaped by many factors, including which news sources you choose for news about the world.

Some people have very little time to keep up with the important events and issues reported via local, national and international news sources, and tend to choose one or two sources regularly for their news. Some people, who consider themselves "news junkies", take lots of time reading and listening to news across a variety of media. Many people are somewhere in between, while others don't care to pay attention to news at all. No matter where you are on the news continuum, it's important to possess some news literacy, which is what this LAMplit was designed to do.

We hope that this guide has given you a new perspective on news. It's just a beginning, and for more information about various aspect of news that have been introduced here, start with some of the sources we've included for you. Or, contact the LAMP to learn more.

ADDITIONAL SOURCES ABOUT NEWS

Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR). www.fair.org

Vanderbilt Television News Archive. www.tvnews.vanderbilt.edu

Kerbel, M.R. (2001). *If it Bleeds, it Leads: An Anatomy of Television News*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Local TV News Project. www.localtvnews.org